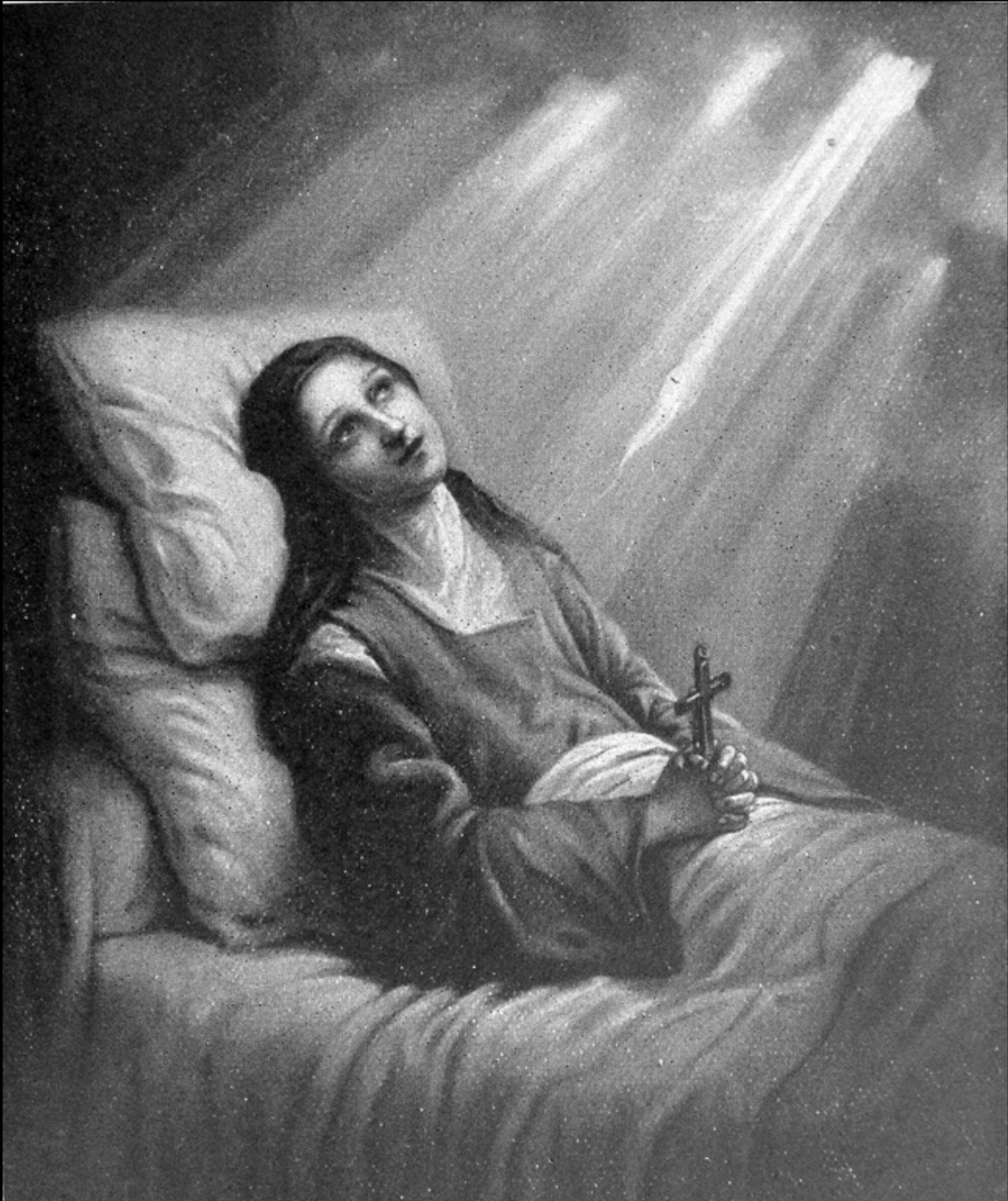
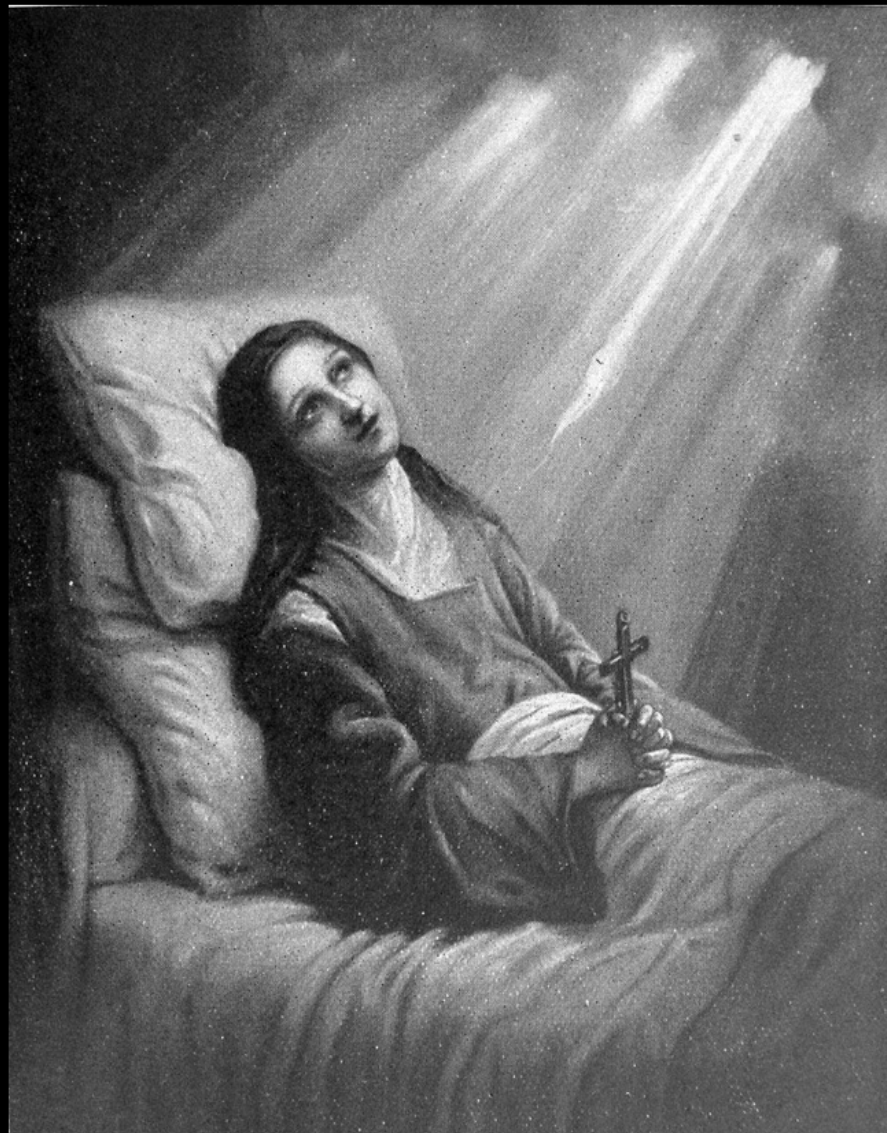


# Joy in Suffering



by Archbishop Adolph Alexander Noser

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# **Preface**

## **‘A Little Child Shall Lead Them’**

Suffering is the common lot of man. Many people spend their lives in an unbroken effort to plan ways of escaping it. All through the ages philosophers have racked their brains in an attempt to find a solution of the mystery of pain. Nineteen hundred years ago the Son of God came down from heaven and chose to be a ‘Man of Sorrows,’ that He might be the Way and Model for suffering mankind. But men either rejected or neglected His wholesome doctrine, and today God, who is ever rich in mercy and compassion, to recall these priceless lessons, has placed before the eyes of the world a tender maiden to teach them in a most attractive manner, both by word and example – one solicitous not about avoiding suffering, but about embracing it joyously with all her heart. The words of the prophet, ‘a little child shall lead them,’ are fully verified in Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.

## **‘You Must Tell People This!’**

Toward the end of her life, Saint Thérèse, knowing that people might be deceived by her perpetual aspect of happiness, insisted on having it made known that she had suffered much. ‘Deep down in my soul,’ she said, ‘there are, I own, joy and transports of delight. But that would not encourage others if they thought that I had not suffered much. Oh, if they only knew how much I suffer! I have had much to suffer on earth. You must tell people this!’

Here we propose to give an outline of the teaching of Saint Thérèse on ‘Joy in Suffering.’ The readings and prayers are arranged in the convenient form of a novena with three

main thoughts for reflection for each day. It is hardly possible to give more than the barest sketch in such a short brochure, but this little study is offered as a tribute of gratitude and love to the Saint, and in the hope that it may be of service to her devoted clients, whose devotion to Saint Thérèse is not of the purely emotional and sentimental type, but her true clients, who, like she herself, are ready to be generous even to heroism and immolation in their love of God, to be among her 'legion of little victims of Divine Love' who will follow her to triumph by joy in suffering. Saint Thérèse, be our guide!

'To suffer and to love is purest of all joys.' – Saint Thérèse

'My God, what joy can be greater than to suffer for Thy love?' – Saint Thérèse

'Suffering itself becomes the greatest of all joys when we seek it as a precious treasure.' – Saint Thérèse

'Yes, all that I have written about my thirst for suffering is really true. I do not regret having surrendered myself to Love. Oh! I love Him! My God, I love Thee!' – Saint Thérèse

### **Preparatory Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, I thank the Most Holy Trinity for all the graces lavished upon you, and through you upon the world. I have great confidence in your intercession, both because of your power in heaven, since you yourself said that 'God would refuse you nothing,' and because of your goodness and your promise that 'no one would invoke you without receiving an answer,' since you would 'spend your heaven in doing good upon earth' and 'let fall from heaven a shower of roses.' Intercede for me with the loving Hearts of Jesus and Mary, that the Holy Spirit may assist me to understand your

teaching on 'Joy in Suffering' and may grant me the gift of fortitude, that fired with a burning love of God and souls, I may eagerly follow you in joyous suffering and one day share in your glorious triumph. I promise to show my heartfelt gratitude by doing whatever I can to promote your honor and to make you ever more widely known and loved throughout the world for the greater glory of the most Holy Trinity. Amen.

# **First Day - Saint Thérèse's Attitude Toward Suffering**

## **Her Views on God and Suffering**

The view which Saint Thérèse took of God when He sent her suffering was exquisitely delicate and charming as well as true and consoling. God is not some cruel and heartless being who takes a malicious delight in torturing his helpless victim, but He is the tenderest of fathers. All comes from His boundless love. "Far from complaining to our Lord of the cross which He sends us," she wrote, "I cannot fathom the infinite love which has led Him to treat us in this way." And again: "This trouble is a tender considerateness on the part of Jesus. What a favor from Jesus, and how He must love us to send us so great a sorrow! Eternity will not be long enough to bless Him for it." What a beautiful thought!

But she was human, and so she also asked: "How can the good God, who loves us so much, be happy when we suffer?" There is a touching tenderness and refinement in her playful answer: "Never does our suffering make Him happy, but it is necessary for us; and so He sends it to us while, as it were, turning away His face. I assure you that it costs Him dearly to fill us with bitterness." From this her sensitive heart draws the loving conclusion: "The good God, who so loves us, has pain enough in being obliged to leave us on earth to fulfill our time of trial, without our constantly telling Him of our discomfort; we must appear not to notice it." It was the same delicate feeling that made her reprove a weeping novice, who said to her: "Henceforward my tears will be for God alone. I shall confide my worries to One who will understand and console me." To which Saint Thérèse replied: "Tears for God! that must not be. Far less to Him

than to creatures ought you to show a mournful face. Our Divine Master comes to us in search of rest – to forget the unceasing complaints of His friends in the world, who, instead of appreciating the value of the cross, receive it far more often with groans and tears. Would you be as the mediocre souls? Frankly, this is not disinterested love. It is for us to console our Lord, and not for Him to console us. His Heart is so tender that if you cry, He will dry your tears; but thereafter He will go away sad, since you did not suffer Him to repose tranquilly within you. Our Lord loves the glad of heart, the children that greet Him with a smile. When will you learn to hide your troubles from Him, or to tell Him gaily that you are happy to suffer for Him?” When will I?

### **Her Esteem for Suffering**

Saint Thérèse was not content to know that suffering comes from God’s love, she also wanted to know what He desired to effect by it that she might the more effectively enter into His loving designs. She found three things:

(a) The proof of her love of God. She recognized in suffering the highest proof of pure and genuine love, for “there can be no love without suffering.’ Hence:

“Under the pressure of pain  
I prove my love by test divine!”

In proportion to our willingness to suffer for any one is the measure of our love for him. This, then, is the first thing that God desires to effect in sending us suffering – “that our souls may turn to Him alone”; “His thorns, as they wound us, spread abroad the perfume of our love.”

(b) Oneness with God. But God sends us suffering also because “He longs to give us a magnificent reward.” What is this reward? “He knows that suffering is the only means of



preparing us to know Him as He knows Himself, and to become ourselves divine." What does this imply? "O my God, what shall we then see? What will be this life which will have no end? Our Lord will be the soul of our souls. O unsearchable mystery! 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.'" How do sufferings effect this? By conforming us to Christ Crucified, for "they greatly help to detach us from this earth, they make us look higher than this world." Besides, life and pain are short; "tomorrow, in a brief hour, we shall be at rest"; nay, even now "God already sees us in glory and rejoices in our everlasting bliss. I understand now why He lets us suffer."

(c) There is yet a third effect of suffering – the ransom of souls. "Jesus has for us a love so incomprehensible that He does not wish to do anything without making us His cooperators. He wills that we should have a part with Him in the salvation of souls." How? "From the day He raised His standard of the Cross, all must fight and win in its shadow. Far more by suffering and persecution than by eloquent discourses does Jesus wish to build up His Kingdom." Clearly perceiving this triple value of suffering, Saint Thérèse esteemed every cross as a "mine of gold for us to turn to account," and, being overwhelmed with crosses, she cried out: "Jesus heaps His favors upon us as upon the greatest saints. Ours is an enviable lot, and the Seraphim in heaven are jealous of our happiness!" Do I realize this?

### **Her Insatiable Thirst for Suffering**

Saint Thérèse was logical and she was not a coward. She saw the immense value of suffering and had the courage to embrace it with her whole heart. "I can truly say," she wrote, "that Suffering opened her arms to me from the first, and I



took her to my heart.” In her thanksgivings at Holy Communion, while still quite young, she often prayed: “O my God, who art unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all the consolations of earth.” On the day of her religious profession she asked: “Give me martyrdom of soul or body. Or, rather, give me both the one and the other.” Later she said: “When the way of perfection was opened out before me, I realized that, in order to become a saint, one must suffer much always seek the most perfect path, and forget oneself. I also understood that there are many degrees of holiness, that each soul is free to respond to the calls of our Lord, to do much or little for His love – in a word, to choose among the sacrifices He asks. And then I cried out: ‘My God, I choose everything, I will not be a saint by halves. I am not afraid of suffering for Thee. I fear only one thing, and that is, to do my own will. Accept the offering of my will, for I choose all that Thou willest.’” The reason was because her Love was crucified:

“No other joy my heart would know  
Save immolation like to Thine!”

“Souls strong and pure, in life’s dark night of sorrow,  
Claim but one glory here – the cross to bear.”

In her zeal for souls she sang:

“I love the Cross, I sigh for anguish,  
Suffering for God is my desire:  
If but one soul in fetters languish,  
With thousand lives I would expire!”

This thirst became “more vast than the universe” and developed into a “veritable martyrdom,” so that, thinking of the fearful torments of the martyrs, she exclaimed: “I do not sigh for one torment; I need them all to slake my thirst. My

heart thrills at the thought of the frightful tortures Christians are to suffer at the time of Antichrist, and I long to suffer them all. Open, O Jesus, the Book of Life, in which are written the deeds of Thy saints; all the deeds recorded in that book I long to have accomplished for Thee!" Nor did she ever repent of her desire, for only a few hours before her death she said: "Yes, all that I have written about my thirst for suffering is really true. I do not regret having surrendered myself to Love." Nor will I if I do so!

### **Novena Prayers**

Dear Saint Thérèse, how beautiful and true is the view you took of God when He sent you suffering! What tenderness of feeling in your love for Him! How blind I have been in the past! How often I have complained and murmured against God just when He was bestowing His choicest favors – crosses and trials – upon me! I have looked upon Him as "a hard and austere man" or as a father without feeling and sympathy, who regarded not the pains and tears of his child, and all the while in His love He was cutting most gently and tenderly, and that but to heal, "turning away His face meanwhile, lest He should be overcome by grief at my pain," as the most loving of mothers, though her tears flow fast and her heart is rent with grief, is yet driven by her very love to cause pain to her child, that its life may be saved. O Saint Thérèse, help me to view suffering as you did, to realize that God never loves me so much as when He gives me the Cross as my portion, and obtain for me a delicate and refined love like yours. Pray for me, that God may give me the light to see the immense value of suffering for His own glory, for my eternal reward, and for the salvation of souls. May I, too, be wholly consumed by an insatiable thirst for suffering. I also recommend to you my special intentions in this Novena. God will refuse you nothing.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

# **Second Day - Saint Thérèse's Favorite Crosses**

## **Little Crosses**

Saint Thérèse knew full well that trifles are but trifles, yet that trifles go to make up sanctity, and sanctity is not a trifle. 'Everything,' she wrote, 'has such value in the religious life. Pick up a pin from a motive of love, and you may save a soul.' Little crosses are always within easy reach, and she was eager to make good use of them. 'It is such a joy,' she cried out, 'to think that for each little pain borne with joy we shall love God more through eternity' 'If we only realized what we gain through self-denial in all things!' She did, and for that reason encouraged her sister: 'We must not let slip the smallest opportunity of giving Jesus joy. We must refuse Him nothing.' 'We must not let slip one single occasion of sacrifice.'

She herself, though she suffered constantly from a sick stomach, was so indifferent to what was served at table, to what agreed or disagreed with her, that none could discover it; the Sister next to her inadvertently always left her little wholesome food and drink, but she was silent and rejoiced; the kitchen Sisters, not knowing what to do with remains that had been warmed over half a dozen times, would remark: 'No one will eat this but Sister Thérèse.' She did, and with a smile. She sipped the most bitter medicines drop by drop. Though there was nothing from which she suffered so much physically as the cold, she took no means of keeping from feeling it; she used the discipline, struck hard and fast, and was careful not to lessen the sharpness of the pain; she refrained from indulging in little comforts such as crossing her feet while standing or sitting, and the like.

But she set an almost infinitely higher value on interior self-denial – that of the will and the mind. She would not defend herself when falsely accused, refused to read an interesting letter, kept silence perfectly, bore cheerfully with trying oddities and faults of others, did not satisfy her curiosity even on the night she was given the first indication of her death in the form of a hemorrhage, etc. ‘There are trifles,’ she said, ‘which please our Lord more than the conquest of the world, a smile or a kindly word, for instance, when I feel inclined to say nothing or appear bored.’ And again: ‘Believe me, the writing of pious books, the composing of the sublimest poetry, all that does not equal the smallest act of self-denial.’ And one is still more astounded to hear her say to a novice who had promptly answered a knock at the door: ‘You have done something more glorious than if, through clever diplomacy, you had procured the good-will of the government for all religious communities and had been proclaimed throughout France, as a second Judith.’ Whence this merit? ‘Our Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the LOVE with which we do them,’ and hence, ‘the least act of pure love is worth more for God and the Church than all other good works put together.’ What a subject for earnest reflection and self-examination!

## **Hidden Crosses**

Saint Thérèse had a predilection for hidden crosses. ‘I know a source,’ she wrote, ‘where ‘they that drink shall yet thirst,’ but with a delicious thirst, a thirst one can always allay. That source is the suffering known only to Jesus.’ Hence she also sang:

‘Oh, what charms doth pain reveal  
Veiled in wreathing smiles of flowers!  
I would suffer silently

That my Jesus find relief.  
Joy is mine His smile to see,  
Though an exile in my grief.'

Referring to her bitter interior trials she wrote: 'For five years this way was mine, but I alone knew it; this was precisely the flower I wished to offer to Jesus, a hidden flower, which keeps its perfume only for heaven.' Just why this special love for hidden crosses? 'My God, what joy can be greater than to suffer for Thy love? The more the suffering is and the less it appears before men, the more it is to Thy honor and glory.' Hence, 'God does not despise these hidden struggles with ourselves, so much the richer in merit because they are unseen. Through our little acts of charity, practiced in the dark, as it were, we obtain the conversion of the heathen, help the missionaries, and gain for them plentiful alms, thus building both spiritual and material dwellings for our Eucharistic Lord.' Even in the weeks of her fearful and prolonged agony she preferred to be alone at night: 'I am only too glad to be in a cell far removed from my Sisters, that I may not be heard (the violent cough). I am content to suffer alone; as soon as I am pitied and loaded with attention, my happiness leaves me.' She saw very clearly the wounds that are inflicted on the soul that has no rest until it enjoys the human consolation of having others know its pains, as is evident from her reproof to a novice; 'You feel this fatigue so much because no one is aware of it. This is indeed a very natural feeling - the desire: that people should know our aches and pains; but in giving way to it we play the coward.' Accordingly she concealed her sufferings beneath a smile, so much so that she was thought insensible to pain. And I?

## **Vocational Crosses**

The most important duty of every person is to fulfill faithfully the obligations of his or her state of life, and this usually involves much unsought suffering. Saint Thérèse was a religious and prized the suffering connected with the perfect interior and exterior fidelity to her Rule above all others. She kept her vows with a delicacy and refinement that may well be called heroic.

The degree to which she carried the practice of poverty would have won the admiration of Saint Francis of Assisi, for she was not content with choosing deliberately what was oldest, worst, and most worn, but took a positive delight in being deprived of even that which was most necessary in food, clothing, etc.

By God's special grace she was preserved from temptations against bodily chastity, but her chastity of heart – purity of the affections – which cost her so dearly, was so exalted that her own sisters complained that she was neglectful of, nay, even cold toward, them. But with her superior light she saw that the religious life was not to be a means of indulging in the delights of family life, but rather the sacrifice thereof.

In her obedience she was a perfect copy of Him who 'was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross'; conducting herself as one 'whom everyone had the right to command,' she obeyed all without distinction – her fellow religious, the portress, the infirmarian, etc., as she would God Himself, and this in the most trying and unreasonable commands or even mere wishes not expressed in words. Her principles were: 'Even though everyone should break the Rule, it is no excuse for me,' and: 'Each one ought to behave as if the perfection of the entire Order depended on her personal conduct.'



When the perfect fulfillment of the Rule or one's duty involves some slight inconvenience or embarrassment it is so easy to presume, or at least to seek, a legitimate dispensation; Saint Thérèse also felt this attraction, but she resisted it courageously. 'True,' she said, 'these trifles are a species of martyrdom; but we must be careful not to alleviate the pain of the martyrdom by permitting ourselves or securing permission for a thousand and one things which would make the religious life both comfortable and agreeable.' Accordingly, she would not only not seek or presume a dispensation from any community exercise, even in her extreme illness, but finally only used such favors when obedience obliged her to do so. Her maxim was: 'I can still stand on my feet, and so I must be about my duty.' And mine?

### **Novena Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse, I thank God for the spirit of sacrifice with which He so greatly inflamed you. Alas, how far I am from being inspired with a similar fervor, for I not only let slip countless little crosses, but positively reject them in my blindness and folly. How this must grieve God! Each hour He, in His love, gives me so many opportunities to give up my own views, etc., and I stubbornly refuse. What a loss for God, for souls, and my own joy in eternity! Henceforth I wish to be ever on the alert, I wish to refuse Him nothing. Help me to realize that fidelity to trifles requires just as great, yes, even greater, heroism than the doing of grander things; that the least act of pure love of God is worth more than many a brilliant exterior work done through an inferior motive though it calls forth the praise of men the world over. Obtain for me the strength to hide my suffering from human eyes, lest I lose my hard-earned merit by seeking the consolation of men, like a person who works unto exhaustion and then takes his wages and throws them into the fire. Above all,

Saint Thérèse, I desire to fulfill perfectly the duties of my state, to seek no exemption on account of personal sacrifices of inconveniences, but to do my duty 'as long as I can stand on my feet,' to live as if the perfection of the entire Church depended on my personal conduct. I also recommend to you my special intentions in this Novena. God will refuse you nothing.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

# **Third Day - Saint Thérèse's Threefold Martyrdom**

## **Martyrdom of the Body**

Saint Thérèse had prayed to endure the pains of martyrdom, and she was heard. Her physical suffering alone was more than a martyrdom. Even in her earlier years she suffered much, but it was especially toward the end of her earthly pilgrimage that her pains were multiplied many times over. Her strength wasted, she would literally drag herself to the various exercises of the community, sharing every duty, even the exhausting midnight office, though she had to fight against numbness, weariness and giddiness to keep on her feet. When all was finished, she would pull herself up the stairs by the banister, resting on each step for breath, so that it took her fully half an hour to traverse the icy corridor that led to her unheated cell. When she reached it, she was so worn out that sometimes it took her a full hour to undress. Then she tried to rest on her hard pallet, but having only two thin blankets, the entire night at times was spent shivering from the cold. Her sickness having impoverished her blood, she was all the more sensitive to the cold, so that she confessed on her deathbed: 'My greatest physical suffering was from the cold; I have suffered so much from the cold that I thought I should die of it.' But she fought on, for one of her principles was: 'We must go to the end of our strength before we complain.'

At length, however, she was no longer able to remain on her feet. Being forced to take to her bed, her pains increased; she coughed the greater part of the night; in the daytime she was consumed by a burning fever and exhausted by copious sweats; she was seized by violent hemorrhages and

attacks of suffocation; her extreme emaciation caused very painful sores; when the infirmarian tried to relieve her by raising her to a sitting position, she said it felt as if she were sitting on spikes. 'If you only knew,' she said, 'what I am suffering. One has to experience it to know what it means. I can easily understand why people without faith are tempted to take their life when they suffer like this. I tell you, when one is suffering like this, one is but a step removed from going out of one's mind.' Dare I still ask: 'Did Saint Thérèse really suffer much?' Yet there was always a sweet smile on her lips. And I cannot even bear trifling pains with a smile for the love of God?

### **Martyrdom of the Heart**

This is even more painful than martyrdom of the body. Even as a child the heart of Saint Thérèse craved for love and affection. 'My heart,' she wrote, 'is naturally sensitive, and because of this, is a cause of much suffering. I wish to offer Jesus all that it can bear.' What one might ordinarily lament was for her a source of joy, because of the opportunities it afforded her of proving her love by suffering.

A natural aversion which she felt for another Sister was so strong that her only refuge often lay in flight; yet she was so pleasant toward the Sister that she was suspected of having a particular friendship with her. She volunteered her services to assist a sick nun, though she 'knew beforehand the impossibility of satisfying her,' and she did it 'with such great care that she could not have done better had she been waiting on our Lord Himself.' She offered her aid to the portress, who sorely tried her patience by her particularities and unbearable slowness; but Thérèse's playful amiability did not allow anyone even to guess the violent interior struggle she was waging.

Living in the same convent with three of her sisters, she had much to suffer in curbing her naturally very affective nature and said that God offered her more than one bitter chalice through them. Of all the members of the community she was the one who at recreation associated least of all with her sisters; she worked side by side for many months with her dear Pauline; but never spoke a word to her. 'O my little mother,' she said later, 'how I suffered! I could not open my heart to you and I thought that you no longer knew me.'

This martyrdom of the heart was especially bitter in regard to her dearly beloved father in his trying illness. Words failed to express her grief, and she made no attempt to describe it. Her tears flowed so fast that she could not hold her pen to write, and yet she said: 'The three years of my father's martyrdom seem to me the sweetest and most fruitful of my whole life. I would not exchange them for the most sublime ecstasies, and my heart cries out in gratitude for such a priceless treasure: 'We have rejoiced for the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us.' Precious and sweet was this bitter cross.' Mysterious words! Bitter, yet sweet! If I am eager to offer Jesus all the suffering my heart can endure, I shall understand. Am I?

## **Martyrdom or the Soul**

This is the severest of all suffering. It comes directly from God, and apparently without reason, without warning. Saint Thérèse ate the hard and dry bread of spiritual aridity, of want of consolation in prayer daily throughout her religious life. 'For me it is always night, always dark, black night.' 'Dryness and drowsiness - such is the state of my soul in its intercourse with Jesus! But since my Beloved wishes to sleep, I shall not prevent Him.' She found retreats exceptionally trying: 'I went through the retreat in a state of utter dryness and as if abandoned by God. Jesus, as was His

wont, slept in my little barque. How rarely do souls suffer Him to sleep in peace! Their good Master is so wearied with continually making fresh advances that He eagerly avails Himself of the repose I offer Him, and, no doubt, He will sleep on until my great and everlasting retreat; but instead of being grieved at this I am glad.' There was no time at which she felt less consolation than at Holy Communion. But she did not give up, shorten or hasten through her spiritual exercises on that account. 'When I am in this state of spiritual dryness, unable to pray, or to practice virtue, I look for little opportunities, for the smallest trifles to please Jesus, such as a smile, a kindly word when I would rather be silent. If no such occasion offers, I try at least to say over and over again that I love Him.'

The darkness became ever more and more dense, and to it were added fearful temptations against faith. She herself said: 'I was sorely tried, almost to sadness. So great was the darkness that I no longer knew if God loved me.' Nay more, 'When my heart, weary of the surrounding darkness, tries to find rest in the thought of a life to come, my anguish increases. It seems to me that out of the darkness I hear the mocking cry of the unbeliever: 'You dream of a land of light and fragrance; you dream that the Creator of these wonders will be yours forever.' Nay, rejoice in death, which will give you not what you hope for, but a still darker night, the night of utter nothingness!' A fearful trial indeed for one who loves God most ardently. And 'it was not a veil but a wall rising to the very heavens.' Besides, the devil held her 'with a grip of iron to drive her even to despair.' And how did she act? Without even facing the enemy, she fled to Jesus and assured Him of her readiness to shed her blood in testimony of her faith in a life to come; she turned to Heaven and 'thanked God and the saints just the same, feeling that they wanted to see how far she would push her trust.'

‘...with many a sweet caress  
I to Him my love confide,  
With redoubled tenderness  
When He stealeth from my side.’

This indescribably painful triple martyrdom was endured, not successively, but simultaneously, and lasted till her death. It was so intense that she said: ‘I did not think it was possible to suffer so much.’ Yet she was ever peaceful and calm, cheerful and smiling, ‘Amid these waters of tribulation that I had so thirsted for,’ she said, ‘I was the happiest of mortals.’ I shall be able to fathom this ‘austere sweetness’ only in so far as I am willing to experience it. How strong is my love of God?

### **Novena Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse, even these few brief reflections leave me astounded at the appalling extent and intensity of your sufferings. What must they have been in reality! I begin to understand something of the full and deep truth of those words you uttered toward the end of your life: ‘I did not think it was possible to suffer so much.’ I can indeed think of much, even seemingly boundless ‘possible’ suffering, and you said that your actual anguish exceeded all that you thought it possible to endure. The very thought of such an ocean of pain overwhelms me. How I thank God for the heroic love with which He filled you and the strength of soul with which you bore all! This is the incredibly great price you paid for that veritable deluge of roses you have sent down upon the world from heaven. Pray for me, that I, too, may be filled with courage in all the sufferings of body, heart, and soul that it may please God to send me for His greater glory, the salvation of souls, and my own eternal bliss. Obtain for me the grace to endure them all with the cheerful sentiments with which you welcomed this simultaneous



triple martyrdom, and thus prove my love for God. I also recommend to you my special intentions in this Novena. To one who has suffered so much for Him, God will refuse nothing.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

# **Fourth Day - The Paradox, Joy in Suffering**

## **Not Insensible**

Pain for Saint Thérèse was not a mere phantom, but a sharp reality. In fact, few have probably ever been endowed with such an extreme sensitiveness to pain in body, heart, and soul as she was. She confessed that, 'It costs dearly to give Jesus what He asks,' and that, 'if on these occasions,' i.e., when her anguish is at its height, 'I repeat the more earnestly to the good God and the saints that I love them, believe me, it is in spite of what I feel at the first moment.' She suffered intensely from the cold; her delicate stomach ever rebelled at the coarse food of the Carmel. So great was her constant desire to have just a word with her dear Pauline that she had to hurry past her cell and hold fast to the banister to keep from turning back; the effort she made to refrain from giving a stern look to a Sister who was ever fidgeting with her rosary caused her to be bathed in perspiration every day; when she was given a shower of dirty wash-water in the laundry, her first impulse was to show her displeasure; being falsely blamed for making a noise, she was 'burning to defend herself,' and had to run away to keep from doing so; her whole being was stirred up by the fearful aversion she felt for a certain Sister and her only escape often lay in flight; when she found her books, brushes, etc., in disorder, she had 'to hold herself with both hands to keep from yielding to impatience' and sharply reproving the offender; if she sang of the joys of heaven, she sang only 'of what she wanted to believe, since the real heaven seemed utterly closed against her.'

Saint Thérèse, then, was very sensitive to pain; her smile cost her much, and it was only by degrees and heroic efforts that she succeeded. In fact, in the beginning of her religious life she 'had to console herself with the thought that all would be known on the day of judgment.' Later she admitted: 'At first my looks betrayed my effort; but little by little self-sacrifice seemed to come more easily without hesitation. When I suffered much, instead of a melancholy look I now answered by a smile. At first I did not always succeed, but now it is a habit which I am happy to have acquired.' Why did she succeed? 'I have always forced myself to love suffering and to give it a glad welcome.' Here again it is true: 'He that is faithful in little things, is faithful in that which is greater,' for 'in this path it is only the first step that is hard; yet God never refuses the first grace - courage for self-conquest. In the onset we must act with courage. By this means the heart gains strength, and victory follows victory.' And what gave her this strength? 'It is such a joy to think that for each little pain cheerfully borne we shall love the good God more for all eternity.' It is a joy for one who truly loves; is it for me?

## **Genuine Joy**

Saint Thérèse knew that 'God loveth a cheerful giver,' and to those entrusted to her care she often repeated: 'Jesus loves the joyous heart, He loves the ever-smiling soul.' She herself was the first to practice what she demanded of others, and was ever joyous and smiling in the midst of her incredibly intense sufferings. 'To suffer and to love is the purest of all joys,' she said, and 'suffering has been my heaven upon earth. The only real happiness on earth is to strive always to think 'how goodly is the chalice' that Jesus gives us.' When she was pitied, she said: 'Don't be so sad about me; I have reached the point of not being able to suffer any more, because all suffering is sweet to me.' When her face wore an

expression of unearthly happiness, she was asked the reason and gave the astonishing reply: 'It is because the pain is so acute now. Nothing gives me such 'little joys' as 'little crosses.' I know of no ecstasy to which I do not prefer sacrifice. There I find my happiness, and there alone. When we expect nothing but suffering, then the least joy is a surprise, and later the suffering itself becomes the greatest of all joys, when we seek it as a precious treasure.'

'My joy I find in pain and loss,  
I love the thorns that guard the rose;  
With joy I kiss each heavy cross,  
And smile with every tear that flows.'

When Heaven refused her relief, she 'thanked God and the saints just the same,' and she 'paid our Lord all sorts of compliments when He disappointed her.'

She also knew how to use her faults and failings as a means of joy - a most important thing for every one striving for holiness, 'I hasten to say to the good God: 'My God, I know that I have deserved this feeling of sadness (for my fault), yet, allow me to look upon it as a trial which Thy love sends me. I regret my sin; but I am glad to have this little suffering to offer Thee.' 'If Thou dost remain veiled - well, then I consent to be benumbed with cold, and I rejoice in the suffering, howsoever merited.' Truly a heavenly prudence! Saint Augustine said: 'When one loves, one does not suffer, or if one does, the very suffering is loved.' And so Saint Thérèse in the midst of her trials cried out: 'Thou hast given me, O Lord, delight in all Thou dost. For what joy can be greater than to suffer for Thy love?' Her clear and living faith gave her a very deep insight into the immense value of suffering and made her esteem it as the most precious of all treasures for God's glory, the salvation of souls, and her own eternal bliss. It was this lively faith, animated by ardent love,

that explains her seemingly strange yet profound remark: 'My feast days are the days on which the good God tries me most.' Are they mine too?

## **Refined Joy**

The joy which Saint Thérèse showed in her sufferings was deep and sincere, but there must be no misunderstanding – it was not sensible joy, for in this her keen spiritual intuition penetrating the disguise saw clearly a form of delicate self-love: If you wish to know joy and love suffering, you are really seeking your own consolation, because once we love, all suffering disappears.' The joy of which she spoke is quite different: 'Here I find but one joy, that of suffering, and this joy, which is not one of sense, is above all joy.'

This joy 'is rather peace, for he who says peace does not say joy, or at least sensible joy: to suffer in peace it is enough to will heartily all that our Lord wills.' It is a joy similar to that of the Divine Victim in His Passion: 'Our Lord in the garden of Olives enjoyed all the delights of the Trinity, and yet His agony was none the less cruel. This is a great mystery, but I assure you, I can form some inkling of it from that which I myself am enduring.' Her joy is utterly selfless, for she rejoices in the very fact of being without joy if this state gives joy to God: 'My joy it is that joy is past and gone my Lord's consoling smile.' 'There are people who make the worst of everything. As for me, I do just the contrary. I always see the good side of things, and even if my portion be suffering without a glimmer of solace, well, I make IT my joy.'

'If Thou leavest me too,  
O my one Pearl Divine,  
Without e'en a caress,  
Then shall Thy joy be mine!'

‘Did you but know how great is my joy at giving joy to Jesus through being utterly deprived of all joy! Truly this is the very refinement of all joy – joy we do not feel!’ Is mine also such?

## **Novena Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse, ever happy, smiling, and joyous in the midst of pain, in spite of your extreme sensitiveness to suffering, I rejoice with you in the glorious triumph which you have won over self through your tender love of God. Obtain for me the grace to walk in your footsteps, that I may always find a sincere delight in that which gives joy to God, even though it be the very fact of my being utterly deprived of all sensible joy. May that which pleases God always be pleasing to me. Help me to realize that the cross is His most precious gift, most priceless token of His love. I, too, wish to thank Him for all His gifts, even those which seem less beautiful than the ones He bestows on others. Above all, I desire to thank Him at all times for the crosses and sufferings He sends me knowing that one ‘Thanks be to God’ in trials is worth a thousand in things according to our will. Saint Paul bids us ‘give thanks in ALL things,’ and daily throughout the year the Church makes the priest pray in the name of every one of the faithful: ‘It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, that we should at ALL times and in ALL places give thanks to Thee, O Holy Lord, Almighty Father, Eternal God.’ O Saint Thérèse, pray for me, that these words may sink deep into my soul and that I may truly give thanks and rejoice in ALL things, that thus my joy, like yours, may attain to the heroic, the very refinement of all joy, a joy pure and wholly unselfish. I also recommend to you the special intentions for which I am making this Novena. God will refuse you nothing.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

# **Fifth Day - Saint Thérèse's Impregnable Fortress - Prayer**

## **Constant Prayer**

What were the means which Saint Thérèse used to gain such a triumph over suffering? In the first place, she shut herself up in the impregnable fortress of prayer. From her earliest years she was filled with a high esteem and deep love of prayer. She knew that the saints had obtained from prayer that wonderful science which enthalls the world and irresistible power over the minds and hearts of men. For they 'lean on God Almighty's power itself and their lever is the prayer that inflames with the fire of love. With this lever they have raised the world - with this lever the saints of the Church Militant still raise it and will raise it till the end of time.' Enlightened as she was, she understood that 'the Creator of the Universe awaits the prayer of a poor little soul to save a multitude of other souls, ransomed, like herself, at the price of His Blood.' Hence her boundless confidence in the power of prayer: 'How wonderful is the power of prayer! It is like unto a queen who, having free access to the king, obtains all that she asks for.' Consequently, with her prayer was not something dreary, saddening, oppressive, and labored, but spontaneous and joyous: 'With me prayer is an uplifting of the heart, a glance toward heaven, a cry of gratitude and love uttered equally in sorrow and in joy. In a word, it is something noble and supernatural, which expands the heart and unites it with God.'

If her whole life was, so to say, one unbroken prayer, this was especially true of her weeks and months of suffering. They were one long prayer, in spite of the fearful anguish and desolation in which her soul was steeped. Not only did



she herself pray without ceasing, but she pleaded most earnestly and touchingly that others should also pray much for her, so that she might be able to suffer in patience. When her whole body and soul were racked with pain, and she spent night after night without sleep, she was asked what she did during her long vigils; she replied: 'I pray.' But her pain had forced her to make it the prayer of silent love, and so when further questioned: 'What do you say to Jesus?' she answered: 'I say nothing – I only love Him. I can still suffer and love, and that is enough.' Our Lord has said: 'Ask, and you shall receive.' Saint Thérèse took Him at His word and asked for strength to suffer with joy. She was heard because of her trust and perseverance. Have I made steadfast prayer my fortress to which I take instant refuge in suffering? And I wonder why I did not rejoice in pain!

### **A 'Little Child' of Mary**

Saint Thérèse's life of prayer centered in very great measure about the Blessed Virgin Mary and through her, the 'Cause of our Joy,' she obtained the strength to suffer with joy. There is a charming ease and simplicity about her devotion to our Blessed Mother, making it as imitable as it is admirable. She was simply a 'little child' of Mary. Just as a little child often thinks of its mother, goes to her with confidence in every need and danger, does all it can to please her and give her joy, and especially delights in trying to imitate her in everything, so Saint Thérèse did with regard to her heavenly Mother.

Being so fired with trustful love, it was but natural that she should turn to Mary, especially in her sufferings. Reflecting on the deep sorrows of the Mother of God, she reasoned thus:

‘Since the King of Heaven hath willed His Mother dear,  
The night of faith, heart’s anguish to endure,  
It must be good to suffer, to taste the cup of sorrow here;  
Yea, here to love and suffer is happiness most pure.’

This also made her feel that Mary’s motherly heart was filled with tender compassion for her children’s suffering, and so in her anguish she pleaded: ‘Mother, let my tired spirit rest beneath thy veil.’ When she was in such pain that she could no longer pray as she was formerly wont to do, she said: ‘I can only look at Mary and say, ‘Jesus.’” And speaking of her last night on earth: ‘Oh, with what fervor I have prayed to her! And yet it was pure agony. Utterly exhausted, I asked Our Lady to take my head into her hands, that I might be able to bear it.’ With good reason she could conclude the last poem she penned upon this earth:

‘I fear no more thy majesty so far removed above me,  
For I have suffered sore with thee; now hear me, Mother mild,  
Oh, let me tell thee face to face, dear Mary, how I love thee,  
And say to thee forevermore: I am thy little child.’

How much pain she bore with Mary’s aid – and with what joy! How much could I cheerfully bear if I were in very truth Mary’s ‘little child’!

## **The Book of Jesus Crucified**

The Crucifix was in very truth the ‘book’ of Saint Thérèse; she read in it many times daily and studied it profoundly.

(a) In the first place, she busied herself with the Passion as a whole – she fathomed the science of a God suffering for love of His creatures and felt her love grow warm in return. The first sermon which she understood as a child was one on the Passion. Later the words of Isaias depicting the ‘Man of

Sorrows' were made by her the 'basis of her whole spirituality.' She understood that 'true glory and the only royalty to be coveted lies in being unknown and esteemed as naught,' like Jesus Crucified. Seeing man so unmindful of this love, she wrote: 'My heart was torn with grief to see the Precious Blood falling to the ground with no one caring to treasure It as It fell, and I resolved to remain in spirit at the foot of the Cross, that I might receive the divine dew of salvation and pour it out upon souls.' She called herself 'a little flower which unfolded itself under the shadow of the Cross, having for refreshing dew His tears, His Precious Blood, and for radiant sun His Adorable Face.' She was deeply devoted to the Way of the Cross.

(b) In her love of Jesus Crucified it was especially to the Holy Face that she was particularly attracted, and here she was ever 'discovering new beauties that entranced her soul.' It was her 'home, her kingdom, her sun.' Confined to her bed of pain, she delighted, in imitation of Veronica, to wipe the image of the Holy Face with rose petals, 'to offer my Jesus some little consolation.' This same Holy Face was her bulwark and strength in her fearful temptations against faith: 'Mother, how I was tempted last night; but I looked at the Holy Face all the time and made acts of faith.'

(c) She was above all enamored of the perpetual memorial of the Passion with its abiding presence of Jesus Crucified – the Holy Eucharist, in which Jesus continues His life as a Victim. It was thence that she drew her seemingly incredible strength of soul. It was her heaven on earth:

'My heaven lieth hid in the little white host,  
Unto this Source divine I go to draw my life.  
Thou comest, my Beloved, to transform me in Thee,  
This union of love, this ineffable delight,  
Is truly heaven to me!'

The sacrifices she made to receive even a single Holy Communion seem almost superhuman and clearly showed how great was her esteem for the Fountain of divine strength. In her exhausting illness she would literally drag herself to the chapel each morning, and this in spite of the most painful remedies which sometimes had to be applied to her, and when she was urged to spare herself, she replied: 'Oh, I do not count this too much to win one Holy Communion!' In her Act of Oblation she ventured to call upon the Omnipotence of God to make her a living and perpetual tabernacle of her Eucharistic God, 'Abide in me, as Thou dost in the tabernacle, never forsake Thy little victim,' and she felt that her request was heard: 'Thou dwellest in me a Prisoner night and day.' What strength of soul to endure suffering would be mine if I read daily in the Book of Jesus Crucified and the sublime memorial thereof, the Holy Eucharist. Do I?

### **Novena Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse, prayer was for you an impregnable fortress, which shielded you from the assaults of the enemy. How clearly you understood its tremendous, almost all-powerful, efficacy, and how well you used it! Obtain for me a similar grace and assist me to follow you in ever taking refuge in prayer, with promptness and perseverance, and to turn spontaneously and with filial confidence to our heavenly Mother, striving day by day to become more and more a 'little child' of Mary. Above all, assist me to study daily the lessons contained in the Book of Jesus Crucified, especially the great lesson of love, that my heart may be inflamed with an ardent desire to prove my love by the divine test of suffering even unto the sacrifice of my life as a victim of love. May I, too, learn to understand ever more fully the secrets hidden in His Sacred Face and to realize that true greatness lies in being concealed and despised. Dear Saint

Thérèse, by your burning love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, help me to realize the greatness and the priceless value of even a single Holy Mass and Communion, so that I may gladly make any sacrifice or forego any pleasure, rather than miss even once this opportunity of giving joy to Jesus and of drawing for myself the strength I need to prove my love by suffering for Him. May my whole being pant for Him, its true and only blessedness. I also recommend to your intercession the special intentions for which I am making this Novena. God will refuse you nothing.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

# **Sixth Day - Saint Thérèse's 'Armor of God'**

## **Her Breastplate: The Gift of Fortitude**

Neither stoicism nor mere natural courage, nor even the Christian virtue of fortitude, suffices to explain the heroic and joyous manner of Saint Thérèse in enduring pain; for even the infused virtues require deliberation and effort and are joined with slowness and labor in their exercise. But by the gift of fortitude one is inclined to submit promptly, joyfully, and spontaneously to even the least indication of the Divine Will also in the matter of suffering. Thus, in the martyrs who shed their blood amid the most frightful tortures it was the gift of fortitude that made them strong and even gay. Saint Thérèse was also a martyr. Hers was an unbloody martyrdom, yet none the less real, and hence she, too, needed this special help. By constant prayer and fidelity to grace she gradually disposed herself for the fullness of the gift of fortitude, so that in due time she yielded without hesitation, though not without intense suffering, to the promptings of the Holy Spirit urging her to the entire immolation of herself. She herself said that she expected this aid from God because of her efforts in cooperating with His grace: 'If you faithfully continue to give pleasure to Him in small things, Jesus will feel bound to help you in the greater.' Speaking of the day of her Confirmation, she said: 'On that day I received the gift of fortitude in suffering - a gift I needed sorely.' When others marveled at her heroic patience, she exclaimed: 'I have not yet had a moment's patience! It is not MY patience. People do not understand. It is Jesus who does all, and I - I do nothing but be weak and little.' It is in this sense that she would have us interpret her memorable and prudent remark: 'I could never ask greater

sufferings of God. If He were to increase them, I would endure them gladly, because they would be of His sending. But if I were to ask for them, they would be my own, and I should have to bear them all alone; and I have never been able to do anything by myself.' Saint Thérèse fully realized the source whence she drew the strength to endure her long and painful martyrdom: 'How utterly impossible it is to put such feelings into oneself! It is the Holy Ghost who blows where He lists, who gives them to us.' Thus, by the gift of fortitude, Saint Thérèse became strong with Divine strength and endured with joy what, humanly speaking, was quite unendurable – nay, her heart leapt spontaneously for joy at each opportunity for suffering, as that of a famished man does at the sight of food. Does mine? How important it is for me to beg and dispose myself for the gifts of the Holy Ghost!

### **Her Helmet: Confidence in God**

Saint Thérèse had sounded the depths of the tender Heart of God and knew that she could rely wholly upon Him. 'O Jesus,' she cried out, 'suffer me to tell Thee that Thy love reaches even unto folly. What wilt Thou but that my heart should leap up to Thee? How could my trust have any bounds?' It was her strength in weakness: 'When in the morning we feel no courage or strength for the practice of virtue, it is really a grace: it is the time to 'lay the axe to the root of the tree,' relying on Jesus alone. He helps us without seeming to do so.'

No matter how high the tide of her sufferings would rise, she would still cry out: 'The Lord is my rock, upon which I stand, 'who teacheth my hands to fight and my fingers to war.' He is my Protector, and I have hoped in Him.' Or again:

'Thy Heart which guards and giveth innocence  
Will ever be my trust and firm defense;

If in my heart the sudden tempest rise,  
To Thee, my Jesus, I shall lift my eyes.'

When Heaven seemed to turn a deaf ear to her entreaties for relief and sent her instead new physical and mental pains, she playfully remarked: 'I believe they want to see how far my trust may extend. But the words of Job have not entered my heart in vain: 'Even though God should kill me, I would still trust in Him.' I feel that for the moment I should not be able to bear more, but I have no fear, for if my sufferings increase, God will increase my patience. Nothing can frighten me, neither wind nor rain; and if the impenetrable clouds come to hide from me the Orb of Love, that would be the moment to push my confidence to the uttermost bounds, taking good care not to quit my post, well knowing that beyond the somber clouds the Beloved Sun still shines. Nay more, that would be the hour of perfect joy.'

'When He would test my faith and hidden be  
To smile when longing for His gaze once more,  
Oh, that is heaven for me!'

Finally: 'I have no fear of the last struggle, nor any pains – however great – which my illness may bring. God has always been my help. He has led me by the hand from my earliest childhood. I rely on Him. My agony may reach its furthest limits, but I am convinced that He will never forsake me.' Her rule was: 'We can never have too much confidence in the good God, He is so mighty, so merciful. We shall receive from Him quite as much as we hope for.' How true her words! And now how much do I hope for – especially how much strength to suffer?

(3) Her Shield: – Unreserved, Childlike Abandonment to God.  
– Having such an almost boundless confidence in the tender love of her heavenly Father, Saint Thérèse surrendered



herself entirely to Him. By abandonment she understood the embracing beforehand blindly and with joy and enthusiasm of all that it pleased God to send her no matter how great the suffering involved. Her life was like a blank sheet of paper, at the bottom of which she affixed her signature and then placed it in the hands of God, to let Him write thereon all that might please Him, accepting in advance, with joy and gladness, whatever He would write, not knowing what it might be, but convinced it would be only for His glory and her own spiritual good. 'The good God,' she said, 'wills that I surrender myself like a very wee child who does not trouble himself as to what will be done with him.' Accordingly she gave herself to the Child Jesus to be His 'little plaything,' adding: 'I told Him not to treat me like a costly toy that children are content to look at without venturing to touch, but as He would a little ball of no value, that He might throw to the ground, toss about, pierce, leave in a corner or else press to His Heart if it so pleased Him.' 'If He wishes to break His 'little plaything' to pieces, He is quite free to do so; yes, I want only what He wills.'

In her illness she confessed: 'I am now sick and I shall never recover. But I am at peace. For a long time past I have not belonged to myself; I am wholly surrendered to Jesus. If it please Him, I am content to have my sufferings prolonged for years.' Come what may.

'Safe in His arms Divine, near His Sacred Face,  
Resting upon His Heart, of the storm I have no fear;  
Abandonment complete, this is my only law.'

Even when it is a question of life and death her only guide is still abandonment: 'I have no greater desire to live than to die; if Jesus offered me my choice, I would choose nothing. I want only what He wills; it is what He does that I love.' For the same reason she could say: 'Whatever has come from

God's hands has always pleased me, even those things which have seemed less good and beautiful than the gifts made to others.'

But abandonment meant no mere idle passivity, for she was ever alert, ever intensely yet calmly active: 'I sleep, but my heart watcheth!'

'...sleeping on Thy Heart I smile forever more,  
And tender words of love I whisper o'er and o'er.'

If, in spite of all this, God seems to forget her entirely, she has no anxiety: 'He is free to do so, since I am no longer my own but His. He will weary sooner of making me wait than I of waiting!' What a challenge! Meanwhile she continues peacefully to assure Him of her trustful love and surrender:

'Fear not, sweet Lord, my faithful watch I keep,  
I wake Thee not till lowering skies are riven.  
In peace my heart shall wait Thy coming from above,  
And I shall charm Thy Heart with sweet refrains of love.'

She gives as reason for this peace:

'Ever since I have given up ALL self-seeking,  
I lead the happiest life possible!'

'Remember, Jesus, that Thy Holy Will  
Is all my repose and my joy most blest;  
In holy abandonment - nothing I fear -  
In Thy sacred arms, my God, I rest!'

Hence she could say toward the end of her life: 'Now the spirit of self-abandonment is my only guide. I have no other compass, and I know not how to ask anything with eagerness, save the perfect accomplishment of God's

designs upon my soul.' How such a disposition must have delighted God! Would I not give Him a similar joy?

## **Novena Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse, with all my heart I thank God for making you such an invincible warrior by clothing you with His own divine armor of fortitude, confidence, and abandonment. But how truly you merited this favor by your singular fidelity to prayer and zealous correspondence with grace and the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Pray for me, that I may realize how much I, too, could do and bear for the love of God, if I but had the divine gift of fortitude; beg it earnestly for me from the Holy Spirit. Help me to understand more fully something of the loving tenderness of the Heart of my heavenly Father, who deigns to abide in my own soul always, that I may be filled with a boundless trust in Him, knowing that we can never have too much confidence in Him if we are in real earnest about loving Him and seeking to give Him joy in everything. Above all, obtain for me abandonment – a childlike, boundless, unreserved trustful, blind and loving abandonment springing from a deep conviction of God's great love for me. I, too, wish to give up ALL self-seeking. May all that pleases God also be pleasing to me! May I accept it unconditionally and without question, beforehand, knowing that it can only be for my good! I, too, wish to let Him choose for me. to be like a signed blank sheet or a 'little ball' in His hands, willing all and only what He wills, be it joy or pain. I also earnestly recommend to you the special intentions for which I am making this Novena. God will refuse you nothing.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

# Seventh Day - Saint Thérèse's Mighty Arms

## God in Her Heart

Saint Thérèse did not rely on her own strength, but on God's realizing that the Three Divine Persons were really, truly, and substantially present in her heart:

'To live by love is closely to enfold  
The Uncreated Word - Voice of my Lord!  
And with Thee, in my heart of hearts, to hold  
The Spirit sending forth His flame adored.  
Thus loving Thee, the Father, too, is mine:  
My feeble heart hath drawn Him from above,  
O Trinity, the Prisoner Divine!  
Oh, my poor love!'

God, then, with all His omnipotence, was ever at hand, more intimately present to her than her soul was to her body, and conscious of this sweet presence, she cried out: 'I cannot well see what more I shall have in heaven than I have now; I shall see God, it is true, but as to being with Him, I am that already on earth.' This thought was not only her joy, but also her strength:

'My heaven in the Trinity I find,  
Within my heart my Prisoner of love;  
There seeing God, fearless my life I bind  
To serve, to love, nor seek reward above.'

She, too, could exclaim with her holy patroness: 'God and I are a majority!' As the tide of suffering rose higher, it was this thought that gave her new courage and confidence, and during her last days she wrote in pencil and with a trembling

hand the following lines: 'My God, how good Thou art to Thy little victim of Thy merciful love. Now, even when Thou joinest these bodily pains to those of my soul, I cannot bring myself to say: 'The anguish of death hath encompassed me!' I rather cry out in my gratitude: 'I have gone down into the valley of the shadow of death, but I fear no evil, because Thou art with me.'" How did she attain to such an unbroken, loving consciousness of the abiding presence of the Blessed Trinity in her heart? By forming the habit of living with God, her 'Treasure,' in her heart, for, as she confessed: 'Scarcely three minutes ever pass without a loving thought of God.' What a great saint she became! With me it is perhaps hours that pass without such a thought, and I still wonder at my weakness in suffering?

### **The Gentle Hand of Jesus in All**

Being penetrated with a deep and living faith in the indwelling of the heavenly Father in her heart, Saint Thérèse saw nothing come to her, whether joy or pain, directly from creatures, but all from His loving hand – it was always His hand writing on the signed sheet she had given Him; knowing how deeply He loved and watched over her, since His love was above all one of infinite and paternal tenderness, she was firmly convinced that ALL He sent was for her good. In the guidance of her Prioress, whether mild or severe, she saw 'only the hand of God, directing all for the good of her soul.' In crosses and trials she often wrote: 'The hand of Jesus it is that guides everything – we ought to see only Him in all things.' When a wholly unexpected and most bitter disappointment came to her, so great that her tears flowed freely, she wrote to her sister: 'Oh, what a blow! But I feel that it is struck by a hand divinely jealous. It is Jesus who has guided this affair; it is He, and I have recognized His touch of love. It is not a human hand that has done this; it is Jesus, His eyes have fallen upon us. Let us accept with a

good heart the thorn that Jesus presents to us.' Having offered herself to the Child Jesus as a little ball, when she suffered much, she said: 'Jesus riddles His 'little ball' with pin-pricks that hurt indeed, though when they come from the hand of this loving Friend, the pain is all sweetness, so gentle is the touch.' Seeing His 'hand of love' in all, she had no fears: 'I am a 'slender reed,' planted on the shore of the waters of love and tribulation, but reeds bend without breaking, and how could I get broken, since whatever happens, I see only the gentle hand of Jesus!' Hence she concludes: 'I am happy, most happy, to suffer! If Jesus Himself does not pierce me He guides the hand that does.' If I but looked behind the veil in pain, be it exterior or interior, and saw only the 'gentle hand of Jesus,' what strength, peace, and joy would be mine in suffering!

### **Living in the Present**

The presence of God and the seeing of His gentle hand in all suffering did not in the least lessen the exquisite physical pain or mental anguish of Saint Thérèse. She suffered most intensely just the same, but it was in deep peace, for she had made it her rule to live only in the present moment, realizing that the cross of the present is ever accompanied by its measure of grace, and thus rendered bearable, while grace is not at hand for the anticipated crosses of the future. She has given expression to her view in her beautiful poem: 'My Song of Today': -

'What matters it, O Lord, if dark the future hover?  
One prayer for its tomorrow - oh, no, I cannot say:  
My heart untouched preserve - and with Thy shadow cover,  
If only for today!'

She dared not look into the future:

'If I dream of the morrow, my changeful thought affrights me,

My heart, inconstant, mours and wearies of the way;  
I long, my God, that pain and trial to Thee unite me,  
If only for today!'

Seeing her suffer so much, one of her sisters remarked: 'To think that it may increase!' Saint Thérèse replied: 'It is quite a mistake to trouble ourselves as to what I may still have to suffer. It is like meddling with God's work. We who run in the way of love must never allow ourselves to be disturbed by anything. If I did not simply live from one moment to the next, it would be impossible for me to be patient; but I look only at the present. I forget the past, and take good care not to forestall the future. When we yield to discouragement or despair, it is usually because we think too much about the past and the future.' How true! Hence, when she was told that some thought that she feared death, she answered: 'That may easily come to pass. It will be time enough to bear that cross when it comes; meantime I wish to rejoice in my present happiness.' What strength and joy of soul would be mine in the midst of pain if I would but follow this wise teaching!

## **Novena Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse I begin to understand more and more the source of your surprising strength in pain, and suffering, for what can be impossible to one who leans on God Almighty's power, living in the loving consciousness of His abiding presence in the soul? Knowing that He is the best and most tender of Fathers, it is but natural that I realize that all that befalls me comes from His love, and hence is intended for my highest interests, my eternal welfare. Obtain for me the grace to live with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in my heart, to take trustful refuge to Him in instant prayer, to find

my joy and strength in dwelling ever with Him as the Sweet Guest of my soul. Thus it will be easy for me quite spontaneously to see His hand of love in all that befalls me and to accept even the sharpest thorns with joy in my heart. This alone, indeed, may not be sensible, it may not lessen the intensity of the suffering, but it will help me to realize that God always gives the grace necessary to bear the sufferings of the present, and that when the future shall have become the present He will pour out a new measure of grace from the tabernacle of my heart where He has set His abode. Help me to live in the present, with no thought of the greatness of pain that is past, and still less preoccupied with what my loving Father may be pleased to send me in the future. I also recommend to you the special intentions for which I am making this Novena. God will refuse you nothing.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.



# **Eighth Day - Key to the Paradox - Love, the Master Motive of Saint Thérèse**

## **Love of God**

Love, and love alone, love at white heat, can give the only adequate solution of the paradox of Saint Thérèse's joy in suffering, for 'love is strong as death.' As she herself wrote: 'Love can do ALL things; even the most impossible tasks seem to it sweet and easy.' She reflected long and deeply on the immensity and tenderness of God's fatherly love for her, a love so great that she thought it was not possible for God to love a creature more than He loved her, a love, wholly unmerited on her part and which for that reason she delighted to call 'the mercies of the Lord.' Then, realizing that 'love is repaid by love alone,' she thirsted to love God as much as He loved her, and seeing that this would be utterly impossible, unless she could find a means of borrowing His very love, with which to love Him in return, it was precisely this that she solved to do: 'Love attracts love; mine darts toward Thee and would fain make the abyss brim over. Alas! it is not even as a dewdrop in the ocean. To love Thee as Thou lovest me, I must make Thy love my own. Thus alone can I find rest.' But to live and die of love meant much suffering.

'Neath sufferings' bitter winepress  
I will prove my love to Thee;  
To immolate myself each day  
My chosen joy shall be!'

Saint Thérèse was not content with an ardent and generous love, she would also have her love be most delicate and

refined. Thus in the heat of summer she would not wipe the perspiration from her brow, in the winter she would not show by her exterior that she felt the cold by walking stooped or bent or by rubbing her hands together, 'except by stealth,' as she said; she would not even say: 'It is hot, or it is cold or nasty weather,' 'lest,' as she playfully expressed it, 'the good God should see or hear it and feel pained at seeing that I suffered in giving Him joy.' She did the same when she found the life of penance hard: 'I forced myself to smile at it, so that God, deceived, as it were, by the expression of my countenance, might not know that I suffered.' Similarly, in her painful illness: 'When God disappoints me, I pay Him all manner of compliments.'

In her love she would go farther still – she would make it utterly selfless: 'I do not desire that thrill of love which I can feel; if Jesus feels the thrill, it is enough for me'; and carrying this selflessness and delicacy to the highest summit of heroic magnanimity, she said: 'If the impossible were possible, and God did not see them (my good works and sufferings), I would not grieve at that. I love Him so much that I would like to give Him pleasure without His knowing it was I. Knowing and seeing it, He is, in a way, bound to repay. I should like to save Him the trouble!' Would I? Finally, her desire to love, which became a 'veritable martyrdom,' is summed up in that outburst it forced from her glowing heart: 'Jesus. Oh! I would love Him so! Love Him as He has never yet been loved! And I?

### **Love of Self: To Attain to Oneness with Jesus**

Saint Thérèse's love of self was unselfish; she loved herself for the sake of God; her love of self was but a special form of the love of God. True love finds its own happiness in the closest resemblance to the beloved. Such, too, was the great

desire of Saint Thérèse: 'My heaven is resemblance here to know with God. To be like Thee is my desire.'

But love does not find its full contentment in similarity – it seeks for oneness, for identity. 'Love,' says Saint Albert the Great, 'desires to be one with the beloved, and if it could, it would form but one being with the beloved. Love has the power of uniting and transforming; it transforms the one who loves into him who is loved, and him who is loved into him who loves. Each passes into the other, as far as this is possible.' Such was the one great longing of Saint Thérèse: 'to become myself divine,' 'to live the very life of God.' But since her Beloved was God, and 'God is Love,' she, to, would be transformed into Love: 'Deign to transform me, Love, into Thee.' Explaining her thought by the interpretation of the words of Solomon, 'Draw me, we will run,' she says: 'By asking to be drawn, we desire an intimate union with the object of our love. If iron and fire were endowed with reason, and iron could say 'Draw me!' would not that prove its desire to be identified with the fire, to the point of sharing its substance? Well, that is precisely my prayer. I asked Jesus to draw me into the fire of His love, and to unite me so closely to Himself that He may live and act in me.'

But God is Crucified Love and identity means crucifixion in body, heart and soul; Saint Thérèse gladly embraced it: 'How can we complain when Jesus Himself has been considered 'as one struck by God and afflicted' And again: In 'this land of exile we meet with many a thorn and many a bitter plant; but is not this the portion earth gave to our Divine Spouse? It is fitting, then, to consider good and most beautiful this same portion which has become our own.' 'Yes, let us be one with God even in this life; and for this we should be more than resigned, we should embrace the Cross with joy.' That to which she exhorted others she herself practiced first: 'On waking I think of the pains and sufferings

awaiting me, and I rise feeling all the more courageous and light of heart in proportion to the opportunities I foresee of proving my love for our Lord and of gaining – mother of souls as I am – my children's livelihood. Then I kiss my crucifix, and, laying it gently on my pillow, I leave it there while I dress and say: 'My Jesus, Thou hast toiled and wept enough during Thy three and thirty years on this miserable earth. Rest Thee today. It is my turn to suffer and fight.' A beautiful practice, well worthy of imitation!

By thus leading the life of a martyr of love, she merited that highest of all deaths, for which she so sorely yearned – the death of a victim of God's merciful love: 'the death I so ardently desire is that of Jesus on the Cross.' With great confidence she could then in her Act of Oblation make the bold petition: 'Since Thou hast deigned to give me this precious Cross as my portion, I hope to be like to Thee in Paradise and to behold the Sacred Wounds of Thy Passion shine on my glorified body.' Such was the oneness with God which she desired for the love of Him, and it was just because she realized that suffering was the one means of attaining this end that her heart rejoiced spontaneously when pain of body, heart or soul presented itself. As I become one in suffering with Jesus, so shall I also be one with Him in glory. My choice?

## **Love of Souls**

Saint Thérèse was not content to love God herself – she also desired to win much love for Him, 'to make Him greatly loved' by all men. Her Jesus was consumed by an insatiable thirst for souls, and she, being one with Him, shared the same all-consuming thirst. 'I longed at all costs,' she said, 'to snatch souls from the eternal flames of hell.'

But it was less the thought of the misery of the lost than of the grief and sorrow of God that spurred her on; as she expressed it: 'The cry of my dying Saviour: 'I thirst!' sounded incessantly in my heart and kindled therein a burning zeal hitherto unknown. My desire was to give my Beloved to drink.' Under the pressure of a great sorrow she exclaimed: 'Oh, let us not waste our time! Let us save souls! Souls are falling into hell innumerable as the flakes of snow on a winter's day, and Jesus weeps; and we are brooding over our own sorrow, instead of thinking of consoling Him.' And still more clearly: 'There is only one thing to do during the brief day, or rather night, of this life: it is to love, to love Jesus with all the strength of our heart and to save souls for Him, so that He may be loved.' To this end she desired to embrace all vocations, to endure all sufferings, to be a missionary to all peoples and ages.

Above all she was heartbroken at seeing God's generously proffered love utterly neglected, nay, even openly rejected, by so many millions, and even by consecrated souls, and lamented sadly: 'Oh, how little is the good God loved on earth! No, the good God is not much loved! More than ever is Jesus athirst for love and even among His disciples He finds, alas! but few hearts that surrender themselves WITHOUT RESERVE to the tenderness of His infinite love.' Realizing how deep was the sorrow of the Divine Heart because of this, and being all aflame with love of Him, she yearned to give Him an opportunity of satisfying His longing by taking up into her own heart all this neglected and rejected love, opening it as if it were an abyss into which He might pour all. This she did by her supreme act of consecration as a victim to God's merciful love, 'with the sole aim' - to use her own words - 'of pleasing Thee, of consoling Thy Sacred Heart, and of saving souls who will love Thee throughout eternity.' What is the measure of my

love of God when judged by my desire 'to make Him greatly loved' by saving souls?

## **Novena Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse, Seraph of Divine Love, consumed as a victim of holocaust by the flames of divine charity, I thank God for all the love with which He overwhelmed you and for your generosity toward Him. Obtain for me also an ardent and generous love that knows no such thing as impossible, but makes everything sweet and easy, in spite of the sharpest pain that may accompany it. Pray for me that I, too, may become one with Jesus, for only thus shall I be able to really love God as I ought and labor effectively to make Him loved by saving souls. This, indeed, means death to my natural, my human, life, for I cannot live the divine life, the life of Jesus, unless I am willing to die to mine. Just as the food that I eat must be dead before it can be transformed into my body and live my life, be animated by my soul, so must I be wholly dead before I can be, as it were, assimilated by Jesus and animated by His Spirit, the Holy Ghost, and so live His life, for 'unless the grain of wheat falling to the ground die, it remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' Saint Thérèse, obtain for me light to understand fully this beautiful truth, and to give myself courageously to death to self, that I may live the life of God, the life of love. I also recommend to your intercession the special intentions for which I am making this Novena. God will refuse you nothing!

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

# **Ninth Day - Fruits of Saint Thérèse's Joy in Suffering**

## **For Herself**

Even while on earth Saint Thérèse tasted of the delicious fruits of her life of joyous suffering. It might all be summed up by saying that her 'dream' was realized and she attained to oneness with God, was transformed into love, lived the life divine, and exercised all virtues in the highest degree, above all the virtue of love. Being one in mind and heart with her Divine Lover, she also shared in His joy, the joy of God.

'In truth too happy far am I,  
Doing always as I will;  
Joyous then I well may be,  
Nothing ever goeth ill!'

She likewise participated in His own deep peace, a peace which the world cannot give: 'Our Lord's will fills my heart to the very brim, and hence, if aught else is added, it cannot penetrate to any depth, but like oil on the surface of limpid waters, glides easily across. These quick-succeeding changes of the feeling of joy and sadness scarcely ruffle the surface of my soul, and in its depths there reigns a peace that nothing can disturb.' It was but an answer to her lifelong prayer: 'I desire that Jesus should take possession of my faculties, in such a way that my actions may no longer be human and personal, but wholly divine, inspired and directed by the Spirit of Love.'

Her glory on earth after death is astounding. She was given the highest honors of the Church: canonization, long before

the usual time; the Vicar of Christ called her 'the guiding star' of his pontificate, declared her the special patroness of all the missions, and bestowed many other marks of honor upon her. Beautiful basilicas and churches have everywhere been erected to her name. Her image looks down upon us from the walls of nearly every Catholic home, and her statue is found in almost every church and chapel throughout the world, even in the most remote and distant mission lands. Never has the like been seen. Her words are being realized: 'Everyone will love me!' Rich and poor, high and low, all look to her with confidence in all their needs of soul and body, since she had assured them that God would refuse her nothing.

But who shall attempt to conceive the glory that is hers in heaven, where 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard'? Is she not exalted above the very Seraphim - she who said that the places denied to the Apostles themselves would be given to 'little children'? What glorious fruits she gathered for time and eternity! It was all by joy in suffering. Will I do likewise?

## **For Souls**

Saint Thérèse once wrote to one of her missionary brothers: 'If in heaven I could no longer work for God's glory, I should prefer exile to home. I trust fully that I shall not remain idle in heaven; my desire is to continue my work for the Church and for souls. I have asked this of God and am convinced that He will hear my prayer. You see that if I quit the battlefield so soon, it is not from a selfish desire of repose.' On her bed of pain, as her last days drew near, the veil of the future seemed to be momentarily lifted, and she exclaimed: 'Verily the Lord will work wonders for me, and they will infinitely surpass my boundless desires.' And again, in prophetic tones: 'I will spend my heaven in doing good on earth. After my death I will let fall a shower of roses.'



Her words have been more than fulfilled, in fact, there is no longer question of a mere 'shower,' but it has become a veritable torrent, an unprecedented deluge, both of material and spiritual roses. Who will venture even to begin to number them – the many miracles of body and soul that have been wrought through her intercession during the thirty-six years that have passed since she winged her flight to the realms of heaven? How much good she has accomplished – and how much she is still doing – through her autobiography, letters, and poems! How many sinners she has led back to God, how many pagans have received the grace of Baptism through her, how many children have been privileged to receive their First Holy Communion at an early age, and how many souls have been fired with an ardent love of their Eucharistic Lord! Only the very slightest portion of what she is accomplishing is visible to mortal eyes; we shall be dumbfounded when, on entering heaven, we shall see how much of all the good now being done, is to be laid to her credit. Was there ever such a wonder-worker in the history of the Church?

And this her glorious task is far from ended; according to her own words, it is to continue until the end of time: 'Only when the angel shall have said: 'Time is no more!' then I shall be able to rejoice, because the number of the elect will be complete.' Only then will the shower of roses cease to fall, because there will be none left upon whom they may fall. What motives for trust in her intercession! Would I be of genuine service to souls? Then I must be willing to pay the same price which Saint Thérèse paid, in order to purchase the precious fruits she now so lavishly scatters abroad – joy in suffering. Am I willing, or, better, is my love of souls for the sake of God's love strong enough?

**For God**

‘The glory of God, this is my sole ambition!’ Thus wrote Saint Thérèse, and God’s love was in very truth her one and only aim. She longed for heaven, but not to be free from suffering, or to enjoy eternal bliss; it was something else that attracted her: ‘Oh, it is love! To love, to be loved, and to return to earth to win love for our Love. One hope alone makes my heart beat fast: the love that I shall receive and the love that I shall be able to give.’ And again: ‘What draws me to my heavenly home is the summons of my Lord, together with the hope that at last I shall love Him as my heart desires, and shall be able to make Him loved by a multitude of souls, who will bless Him throughout eternity.’ So ardent was this desire that she composed a little prayer and sent it to her missionary brother with the request: ‘Please say this little prayer for me each day; it sums up all my desires: Merciful Father, in the name of Thy sweet Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the saints, I beg Thee to consume my sister with Thy Spirit of Love, and to grant her the grace to make Thee greatly loved!’ To this she added: ‘If our Lord takes me to Himself soon, I ask you to continue this prayer, because my longing will be the same in heaven as upon earth: to love Jesus and to make Him loved.’

But as her end drew nearer, she realized more and more clearly that this was not only her desire, but also her God-given mission to the end of time: ‘I feel that my mission is soon to begin – my mission to make others love God as I love Him.’ She closed her autobiography with that burning prayer: ‘I entreat Thee to let Thy divine eyes rest upon a vast number of little souls, I entreat Thee to choose in this world a legion of little victims of Thy merciful love!’ From heaven she is still recruiting heroic lovers for her ‘legion of little victims’ of joy in suffering for the love of God. She also extends the invitation to me. And my answer?

## **Novena Prayer**

Dear Saint Thérèse, little victim of God's merciful love, how rich is the harvest, how beautiful the fruits you have gathered for God and souls, as also for yourself, through your generosity in proving your love by the divine test, suffering. Indeed, the roses with which you so tenderly covered the

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be.

# My Joy and My Peace, by Saint Thérèse

My joy I find in pain and loss,  
I love the thorns that guard the  
rose,  
With joy I kiss each heavy cross,  
And smile with every tear that  
flows.

When clouds the sunny skies  
o'ercast,  
And weary grows my heart the  
while,  
My joy it is that joy is past,  
And gone my Lord's consoling smile.

My peace is hid in Jesus' breast:  
May His sweet will alone be done!  
What fear can mar my perfect rest,  
Who love the shadow as the sun?

Whene'er He stealeth from my side,  
With many a fond and sweet caress,  
I then to Him my love confide  
With double warmth and tenderness.

'Tis all for Thee, dear Jesus mine,  
Yea, suffering is my gladsome choice;  
My joy on earth - my bliss divine -  
Ah, 'tis to make Thy Heart rejoice!

Since love's divine, celestial breath  
Is all I need my heart to bless,



What matters life, what matters death?  
Love is my peace, my happiness!

## About This EBook

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The cover image is a detail of the painting of Saint Thérèse de Lisieux on her deathbed; from a prayer card issued on the occasion of her canonization in 1925 with no attribution of artist. It was printed in the book.

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